

Water Resources Commission
January 30, 2008
Salem, Oregon

WRC

Dan Thorndike
Jay Rasmussen
Charlie Barlow
John Jackson
Mary Meloy
Susie Smith – Phone
Ray Williams – Phone

Staff

Phil Ward
Tom Paul
Cindy Smith
Debbie Colbert
Brenda Bateman
Dwight French
Jerry Rodgers
Barry Norris
Ruben Ochoa

Others

Mike Carrier
Anita Winkler
April Snell
Willie Tiffany
Helen Moore
George Gerspacher
Cole Moore
Lisa Brown

Written material submitted at this meeting is part of the official record and on file at the Oregon Water Resources Department, 725 Summer St. NE, Salem, Oregon 97301-1271. Audiotapes of the meeting are on file at the same address.

Commissioner Thorndike opened the meeting.

Director Ward introduced Mike Carrier from the Governor’s Office. Carrier is the Governor’s Natural Resources Policy Director.

Commissioner Rasmussen expressed his appreciation for having a full Commission. He noted that the Commission and Department are very engaged and looking at a larger vision for water in Oregon as evidenced by the Oregon Water Supply and Conservation Initiative (OWSCI). The Department staff and Commission are very supportive and available to the Governor’s Office.

Carrier thanked the Commission for their vision and leadership on this issue.

Carrier discussed the development of the Governor’s strategy for Oregon’s water resources and the related role of the Department and Commission in fulfilling that strategy.

He thanked the Department staff for their help in the drafting of LC 50, which reflects the needs of the Umatilla Basin.

Carrier discussed the Governor’s comprehensive proposal for the 2009 Session that describes the state’s water issues. The Headwaters to Ocean (H₂O) is the attempt to lay the foundation for that proposal. This is an attempt to develop a long-term, integrated approach to water that addresses:

1. Water Quantity
2. Water Quality

3. Conservation and Protection of Ecosystems – the services and benefits water provides instream

The H₂O proposal will likely come in the form of agency budget packages and the deadline to get the H₂O proposal to the Governor is March 17.

Served themes have been identified in this proposal. The themes are needs, partners, and tools.

The next step will be to develop the architecture of the project, including: where would the funding come from; how does the funding get distributed; what programs are supported; and how would the programs and services be delivered.

He is working with agency directors to get this accomplished. They are discussing the following:

1. What is incorporated into the H₂O Initiative
 - a. What are the monitoring needs
 - b. What are the compliance needs
 - c. What is technical assistance that needs to be provided to the Initiative
 - d. How do we meet these needs
2. Key stakeholders that we would partner with
 - a. Who are they
 - b. What services can they provide
3. Capital investment needs that are not yet met
 - a. Shrinking state revolving funds
 - b. Funds for planning for new water supply and conservation projects
 - c. Acquisition of instream water rights
 - d. Watershed restoration

These will be discussed further at the Governor's Natural Resources Cabinet meeting. Carrier also plans a preliminary briefing to the Governor's Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff as well as meetings with stakeholders.

The Commission's role is to participate as much as possible.

Commissioner Jackson thanked Carrier for meeting with the Commission and the hard work the Governor's Office has been doing. He also commented that with regards to the watershed councils, he would like to see the money being spent go to help with new restoration projects, and not just backfill into a project that is already underway. He hopes that the money will be able to go as far as it possibly can.

Commissioner Williams expressed his appreciation to the Governor's Office.

Commissioner Smith expressed thanks. Feels that the H₂O document really reflects what the Commission's Future's Subcommittee was trying to achieve. She expressed appreciation for the leadership that came out of the Governor's Office on this.

Carrier noted that the Water Resources Commission, Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), and the Fish and Wildlife Commission (F&WC) need to get connected on this. There needs to be permanent relationships among the three, and ongoing discussion and participation in designing and implementing this in a coordinated way.

Commissioner Barlow commented that such a discussion would be great, because it would allow the three agencies to collaborate and still get their regular work done.

Carrier appreciated everyone's perspectives.

Commissioner Rasmussen asked, what can we be doing, but are not? What new tools might be available? He would like to encourage looking at tools and maybe add some new tools (capital investments; grants, loans) and not backfilling. There may be a need to improve existing tools. He would like to go into the next legislative session with this in mind.

Carrier agreed.

Director Ward noted that a key task is to identify next steps.

Commissioner Rasmussen suggested putting aside some time at the next Commission meeting to discuss this in more depth.

Carrier also suggested that the Department continue preparing policy option packages regarding the initiative to submit to him for the Governor's Budget. He is confident that he can get it done, but has no expectation as to the amount of money that would be involved.

He noted the need to pace ourselves as we approach the next session. In the long-term, he sees an opportunity during the next 20 years to support a commitment of this nature.

Commissioner Thorndike noted that if Oregon shows that it is a proactive player, it will be more beneficial for everyone.

Commissioner Barlow said we need to make some wise investments in the economic future. Water is an investment that will come back around.

Carrier said that we need to be able to demonstrate to the public and others what the return on investment is going to be.

Commissioner Smith noted that this is going to challenge staff to get it implemented. Commission meetings will need to more facilitated over the next few months.

Commissioner Thorndike said the Commission is motivated, driven and interested. It is the most engaged Commission since he has been on.

Director Ward said that the credit goes to Mike Carrier and his ability to communicate the importance of this to the Governor.

Commissioner Thorndike noted that the Department has an incredible staff and that he feels comfortable with what they do.

Carrier said that on behalf of Governor Kulongoski, he appreciates the Commission's work and service to the State of Oregon.

Staff then provided updates on other Department activities.

Barry Norris, State Engineer, discussed the schedule of the five components of the OWSCI.

Debbie Colbert, Field Services Administrator, discussed the grant application process.

Commissioner Rasmussen expressed his appreciation for the Department's energy in this effort. He feels that the 2009 Legislature needs to be told that what was discussed during the 2007 session is being implemented in 2009.

Director Ward noted that with regards to the Umatilla Basin Aquifer Recovery Project, a Request for Information has been put out and that the deadline is February 1, 2008. The Department hopes to have Phases I – III of the Project complete by July 1, 2009, with a report to the 2009 Legislature. The Department will have placeholders in the 2009 Budget for a Umatilla construction project if appropriate.

Commissioner Rasmussen noted that there needs to be a focus on WRD's water messaging since 2009 will be the 100th Anniversary of the Water Code.

Director Ward suggested having the Commission host a water awareness event.

Norris informed the Commission that a new Dam Safety Engineer has been hired. The Department hired E. George Robison. Robison came from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Director Ward introduced Ruben Ochoa as the new Water Policy Analyst. Ochoa comes to WRD from the Texas Water Development Board.

Commissioner Rasmussen expressed the need to have on the agenda for every meeting over the next couple of years a discussion on the bigger picture.

Commissioner Williams concurred.

Commissioner Smith echoed what Commissioner Rasmussen said.

Commissioner Rasmussen asked for brief update at the February meeting with regards to Eola Hills.

Director Ward invited stakeholders attending this meeting to give a legislative update.

Willie Tiffany, League of Oregon Cities, said that stakeholders are more than willing to work with the Commission. He offered their resources to the Commission. He noted that although HB 3203 was not successful in the last session, stakeholders have teamed up with the Umatilla partners and they are fully supportive of each other under the umbrella of SB 1069. He complimented Debbie Colbert for her work in this area.

Commissioner Rasmussen encouraged the Department to set up meetings with the EQC and F&WC sometime over the next six months.

Commissioner Smith expressed her approval with that approach, and asked to see a work plan with timelines that would help start the discussion with the other Commissions.

Director Ward suggested starting with getting the Commission Chairs together first for discussion on this.

Commissioner Rasmussen suggested including into the H₂O document, a connection to the 100th Anniversary of the Oregon Water Code. He also would like to see a list of tools that could be incorporated. There needs to be a forward looking approach included.

Commissioner Rasmussen thanked the Department for the great communication they are providing.

Director Ward noted that the Department is helping fund Representative Dingfelder's Exempt Use Task Force which will be run by the Oregon Consensus Center at Portland State University.

Commissioner Jackson said that Representative Dingfelder has already been in contact with him.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully,

Cindy Smith
Commission Assistant